

NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

REPORT TO THE NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Revised Precept Proposal for Policing - 2019/20

On 15 February 2019 the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (“the Commissioner”) formally notified the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel (“the Panel”) of her revised precept proposal for policing 2019/20. This revised proposal was submitted following the Panel’s decision to exercise their power of veto to the original policing precept proposal submitted on 5 February 2019, in accordance with their powers under paragraph 4 of Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

Further to the submission of a revised precept proposal by the Commissioner, the Panel is legally required to review the proposed precept and report on its decision, including any recommendations, to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner by 22 February 2019.

The Panel met to review the revised proposal on Thursday, 21 February 2019. Membership of the Panel at the meeting was:

Hambleton District Council	Cllr Peter Wilkinson
Harrogate Borough Council	Cllr Michael Chambers MBE
North Yorkshire County Council	Cllr Carl Les
Richmondshire District Council	Cllr Russell Lord
Ryedale District Council	Cllr Val Arnold
Scarborough Borough Council	Cllr Sandra Turner
Selby District Council	Cllr Mel Hobson
City of York Council	Cllr Chris Steward
Community Co-opted	Santokh Singh Sidhu
Community Co-opted	Paula Stott

The Panel would like to thank the Commissioner, her staff and Chief Constable Lisa Winward for attending the meeting on 21 February and for the responses that were provided to the questions and issues that the Panel members raised.

Revised policing precept proposal

The Commissioner presented a revised precept proposal to the Panel to set the police element of the council tax for 2019/20 at £255.77 for a Band D property. This is an increase of £22.95 over the 2018/19 level (in percentage terms, around 9.9%).

This proposal represented a reduction of £1 on the original proposal submitted by the Commissioner on 5 February.

The Panel's rationale for exercising its veto on 5 February concerned the lack of assurance and detail provided to the members to enable a balanced decision to be taken on what was felt to be a significant increase in the precept. The Panel's report set out a series of recommendations for the Commissioner to consider in presenting the revised precept. The Panel's report can be found at <http://nypartnerships.org.uk/pcp2019>

Members welcomed that further detail had been provided by the Commissioner ahead of the meeting held on 21st February, in response to their statutory report and the recommendations therein.

However, some concerns and anxieties were raised within the discussions regarding both the execution and effectiveness of the Commissioner's plans, as well as the actual level of the precept proposed.

Critically, the Panel wished to emphasise for the Commissioner the importance for the public of seeing a visible difference within the course of the next year to their local neighbourhood policing, as a result of the increase in precept. In particular, for elected Members on the Panel, it was acknowledged that if the public do not see any significant difference then questions will have to be answered by the Panel, as well as the Commissioner. While the Panel acknowledged that the statutory process around detailed budget setting cannot progress until after the precept has been agreed, the Panel were clear that the public nevertheless required firm assurances of how their money will be spent.

The Commissioner acknowledged the Panel's anxieties around delivery of the plans for the frontline. The Chief Constable sought to provide reassurance for the Panel and public that the budget would be allocated as intended and stressed the need for policing to strike a balance between tackling 'high harm' crime and achieving more visible local policing. The Commissioner acknowledged that it is regrettable that these much-needed resources for the frontline have to be funded from a considerable increase to Council tax but that this was a one-off opportunity

afforded by the Home Office to do this which would not be available to North Yorkshire again.

Concerns were raised by members regarding the feasibility of achieving the planned recruitment programme within the forecasted timescales. While the Commissioner and Chief Constable acknowledged some of these concerns, they expressed confidence that the forecasted numbers could be achieved through a variety of means such as drawing on transferees, direct entry opportunities and programmes such as Police Now. The Commissioner was also asked whether, in view of increases in certain types of crime and the growing complexity of crime, whether the target number of officers would be adequate. The Commissioner was keen to stress that while the frontline resources will be critical, it will be important for the police to foster good partnership working and to roll out a more multi-agency approach in localities.

The Commissioner was also asked about savings plans and the feasibility of these being fully realised, as scant information has been provided on these. The Panel were advised that 11 business cases have been agreed in principle but that many are currently at a sensitive stage in terms of potential impact on staffing. The Commissioner committed to sharing further information on these at the next Panel meeting and expressed confidence around working effectively with the Chief Constable and Interim Chief Fire Officer to achieve savings.

Some members of the Panel expressed that they felt the level at which the proposal was being set was still too high, particularly where there are a lot of significant increases to Council Tax more widely.

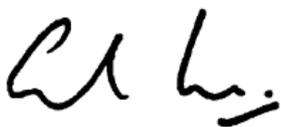
However, the Panel also recognised the need for greater resources to be put into local policing, as discussed at the previous meeting. Members also acknowledged that the Commissioner has no alternative but to increase the precept to the level proposed as the government will not provide this opportunity to boost resources if it is not taken up in 2019/20.

In this context - and balanced against the concerns highlighted – Panel members considered that the proposal could be accepted but that this would be done with significant reluctance. It was recommended – and agreed - that to accept the proposal would necessitate more rigorous financial monitoring going forward by the Panel around the policing budget. This would be with a view to getting the requisite assurance that adequate progress is being made against the Commissioner's plans for 'Reinforcing the Frontline' and against the Police and Crime Plan generally. In addition, more detail needed to be presented to the Panel to set out progress against savings plans and to outline the business cases which have been agreed.

Decision – Policing precept proposal

The Panel unanimously agreed to accept the Commissioner's proposal for a precept increase of £22.95 (for a Band D property) for 2019/20.

Due to the significant reluctance expressed at making this decision and the concerns identified, the Panel requests that quarterly budget reports are provided to assist them with further monitoring of the Commissioner's progress in delivering her plans, in addition to regular reporting on savings plans.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Les'.

Councillor Carl Les
Chair, North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

22 February 2019